



Governor's Subcabinet on International Affairs

Annual Report to the Governor

Prepared by
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Secretary of State

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2020 Report Highlights

The major international highlights for the State of Maryland in the year of 2020 were:

Over 90 participants in the virtual signing of the Maryland-Hauts-de-France MOU by Governor Hogan and his counterpart President Bertrand. The signing ceremonies took place simultaneously at the French embassy in D.C. with French Ambassador Philippe Etienne, and reciprocal signing at the U.S. embassy in Paris with U.S. Ambassador Jaime McCourt.

Unprecedented participation of +300 attendees at the annual Sister State legislative reception. The Consulate of Mexico and the Maryland Secretary of State Address Confidentiality Program signed an agreement to help with training and exchange of information. First Lady Yumi Hogan as well as Minister Xueyuan Xu from the Embassy of China gave remarks. Embassies of Japan, Israel, France, South Africa, Estonia, China, Mexico and Peru had representatives in attendance.

The International Division in the Secretary of State's Office worked with international partners from Turkey, China, Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea to process PPE donations during COVID-19 totaling 145,000 masks, 107,000 gowns, 50,000 gloves and 50 gallons of hand sanitizer.

Lt. Governor-led trade mission to Arab Health and Cyber Tech Tel Aviv Conferences, with Maryland medical device company Sonavi Labs winning the Innov8 global pitch competition.

The signing of a cooperative agreement to foster economic development collaboration between the Maryland Department of Commerce and the Government of Quebec, a result of the Governor's 2017 trade mission to Canada.

Multiple foreign direct investment (FDI) recruitment wins, with Japan-based Nobelpharma and Canadian company Aurinia Pharmaceuticals, among others, choosing to open their newest facilities in Maryland.

One of the world's largest international forest product producers, Metsä Group of Finland, signed a new three-year contract (with options for another three years) with the Port of Baltimore, which will also include expanded operations.

The Maryland Seal of Biliteracy program for the 2019-2020 school year had 22 participating local school systems. A total of 3,365 Maryland seniors earned a Seal of Biliteracy by achieving high levels of proficiency in English and another language based on scores on rigorous nationally recognized language assessments.

The Department of Health provided culturally informed and language-accessible health screening services to ~1300 humanitarian immigrants representing over 30 different countries who made Maryland their new home.

In 2020, the Maryland National Guard (MDNG – comprised of the Maryland Army (MDARNG) and Air (MDANG) National Guard) conducted 42 State Partnership Program (SPP) events, 21 with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and 21 with Estonia.

GOCI's varied efforts to aid in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic has manifested in several acquisitions and redistributions of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that have been sourced from foreign countries. Principal among these efforts was former GOCI Communications Director Soo Koo's leading role as translator for "Operation Enduring Friendship". The operations goal of acquiring 500k COVID-19 test kits from the Republic of South Korea came at a time when not just Maryland, but our entire nation was desperately in need of the adequate testing capability required to control the spread of the deadly virus. Director Koo's tireless efforts were acknowledged for "special thanks" by Governor Hogan during his live press conference to announce the acquisition.

Background

Purpose of Subcabinet:

In accordance with the Executive Order 01.01.2005.24 (May 11, 2005), the Governor's Subcabinet on International Affairs is tasked to convene on a quarterly basis to coordinate and collaborate on the international activities of the State. In addition, the Subcabinet is tasked to develop, evaluate and coordinate a cohesive international strategy in order to enhance the state's competitiveness and stature in the global marketplace and international arena. In 2020, the Subcabinet convened three times: Feb. 19, April 29 and Oct. 28.

Membership of Subcabinet:

Chaired by the Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith, members of the Subcabinet are:

1. Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford
2. Kelly Schulz, Secretary of the Department of Commerce
3. Joseph Bartenfelder, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture
4. Greg Slater, Secretary of the Department of Transportation
5. Dr. James D. Fielder, Jr., Secretary of the Maryland Higher Education Commission
6. Ben Grumbles, Secretary of the Department of the Environment

The following agencies have participated in the Subcabinet meetings either at the invitation of Secretary Wobensmith or at the department's request:

1. Governor's Office of Community Initiatives
2. Maryland Department of Health
3. Maryland Insurance Administration
4. Maryland Military Department
5. Maryland State Department of Education
6. Maryland Department of Human Services
7. Governor's Office of Small, Minority, & Women Business Affairs
8. Maryland Department of Planning
9. World Trade Center Institute
10. Governor's Federal Office

Agency Reports

Office of Secretary of State

Key accomplishments:

- Over 90 participants in the virtual signing of the Maryland-Hauts-de-France MOU at the French embassy in the D.C. with French Ambassador Philippe Etienne, and reciprocal signing at the U.S. Embassy in Paris with U.S. Ambassador Jaime McCourt.
- Unprecedented participation of +300 attendees at the annual Maryland Sister State legislative reception. The Consulate of Mexico and the Secretary of State Address Confidentiality Program signed an agreement to help with training and exchange of information. First Lady Yumi Hogan as well as Minister Xueyuan Xu from the Embassy of China gave remarks. Embassies of Japan, Israel, France, South Africa, Estonia, China, Mexico and Peru had representatives in attendance.
- Guided the Latin American community in Maryland that donated 7 tons of PPE and food supplies to Ecuador during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In January 2020 the Maryland-Negev Israel Sister State Committee invited the BESA exhibit to be shown at the JCC of Greater Rockville. The BESA exhibit highlights Albanian Muslims who aided Jews during WWII. The opening event, attended by 200 guests, garnered support from the Embassies of Israel and Albania in D.C. and USAID. The exhibit was attended by an estimated 1000 guest: 33 at the educator's workshop, 110 kids and parents attended a BBYO reception aspiring to involve more Jewish teens in more meaningful Jewish experiences, 6 school/youth group tours, 20 of the JCC Board.
- Secretary Wobensmith increased exposure participating in events with Meridian International, the African Union, as well as forming relationships with Ambassadors of Bosnia Herzegovina, Honduras, Ecuador, El Salvador and Guatemala.
- Director Mary (Mendy) E. Nitsch presented to fellows in the LEAD Maryland program through the University of Maryland. LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc. is dedicated to identifying and developing leadership to serve agriculture, natural resources and rural communities, and includes an international component to each cohort/class
- The International Division coordinated PPE donations from governments and/or community organizations China, Vietnam, Turkey, India, South Korea, Taiwan.
- Jan 3. Hosted international visitors from Sister State Province Anhui's Jianzhu (Architecture) University at the Maryland Energy Administration focusing on high-performance building energy codes/standards, energy and environmental design (LEED) and energy-saving materials.
- Jan. 7 Hosted visitors from Sister State Province Gyeongnam-do's External Cooperation Division at the Planning & Coordination Bureau, South Korea met with the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) focusing on recent programs supporting new business-like startups, early stage technology and IT companies.
- Jan. 14 The Secretary of State's Office and the Maryland Department of Agriculture hosted a high-level delegation from Anhui Province's Foreign Cooperation Division, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department, to discuss possible areas of cooperation in agricultural technology and trade.

- Hosted South African youth basketball players visiting Maryland through Trax Sports, LLC. which has an exchange program from South African athletes to travel to the United States.
- Held Sister States of Maryland meetings and Governor's Subcabinet for International Affairs successfully using virtual platforms throughout 2020.
- Worked with the Maryland Sports Commission and the leadership of the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill to promote the Inaugural Event in October 2021 among our Sister State and international contacts, namely the equine industries of China and Japan. Assistance in 2021 will include promotion for participants (riders), attendees/audience, and event sponsors.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- France
- China
- Latín América (Perú, Educador, El Salvador)

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the Maryland-Anhui Sister State relationship with participation from Governor Hogan, Party Secretary Li and Governor Li.
- Virtual celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Maryland-Kanagawa Japan Sister State relationship. In-person celebration tentatively planned for 2022.
- Keep momentum of the Hauts-de-France Sister State MOU signing by pursuing bilateral projects in life sciences and cyber security

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

Maryland has received PPE from several Sister State regional and non-Sister State governments.

Maryland donated PPE to Anhui Province, China and the country of Ecuador. Relationships with many embassies in D.C. continue via virtual platforms and occasionally in-person meetings.

Maryland Department of Commerce

Key accomplishments:

- Lt. Governor-led trade mission to Arab Health and Cyber Tech Tel Aviv Conferences, with Maryland medical device company Sonavi Labs winning the Innov8 global pitch competition.
- The signing of a cooperative agreement to foster economic development collaboration between the Maryland Department of Commerce and the Government of Quebec, a result of the Governor's 2017 trade mission to Canada.
- Multiple foreign direct investment (FDI) recruitment wins, with Japan-based Nobelpharma and Canadian company Aurinia Pharmaceuticals, among others, choosing to open their newest facilities in Maryland.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Germany

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- Continuing to support Maryland businesses through our various programs and virtual events, with the hope that we can begin leading trade delegations, in-person trade shows, and in-person events and services (such as the delayed soft-landing program) again in the back half of 2021.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- With nearly every 2020 trade show and delegation having been cancelled, Commerce and OIIT pivoted to a virtual strategy. These efforts included virtual trade shows and "site visits", such as the Bio Innovation Conference in October and numerous MAPIT webinars. Many staff in OIIT and Commerce also dedicated time to broader Commerce COVID-19 relief efforts (including foreign supplier vetting). The terms of the ExportMD grants were changed as well, allowing our exporters more flexibility in reimbursing expenses spent on digital marketing.

Maryland Department of Transportation

Key accomplishments:

- Sponsored and participated in World Trade Center Institutes “Maryland State of the Ports” event held virtually on December 2, 2020. Maryland’s top transportation officials discussed the latest news and future plans for the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore and BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport at the annual World Trade Center Institute’s State of the Ports event.
- One of the world’s largest international forest product producers, Metsä Group of Finland, signed a new three-year contract (with options for another three years) with the Port of Baltimore, which will also include expanded operations.
- The MDOT MPA again achieved recertification in the review of international standards for environmental management. The certification – known as ISO 14001 for Environmental Management System – recognizes the many environmental initiatives and programs in place at the Port of Baltimore’s state-owned public marine terminals. The MDOT MPA was the first Maryland state government agency to be certified with the ISO 14001 status in 2014, and was recertified in 2017.
- Our great longshore workers set a record in August 2020 by handling 5,536 container moves off the Maersk Edinburgh.
- Continued progress on Governor Hogan’s Traffic Relief Plan (TRP). As part of the process, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) continued work on the I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study with the publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and holding six public meetings, four virtual and two in-person, during the public comment period of the NEPA process. Work also continued on the Pre-NEPA activities for I-270 from I-370 to Frederick. MDOT advanced the solicitation process for Phase 1 of the P3 Program by shortlisting qualified proposers, participating in collaborative meetings and communications with the shortlisted proposers on key aspects of Phase 1, and receiving technical proposals on December 23, 2020 with financial proposals due on January 8, 2021. The TRP associated Opportunity MDOT Program to enhance community benefits and encourage DBE/MBE participation in the program, including job training, also continued to make progress.

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- As a requested participant in the Subnational Agreement between the Province of Ontario, Canada and the State of Maryland memorialized by an event Governor Hogan attended on December 17, 2020, MDOT will plan to participate in a likely event during 2021 to fulfill Section 2- “Implementation and Areas of Cooperation”, Sub-section iii- ‘Evaluating models to finance transportation infrastructure projects that would be mutually beneficial to the parties.’
- As a requested participant in the Memorandum of Understanding Sister States Agreement between the Government of Hauts-de-France Region of the French Republic and the Government of the State of Maryland memorialized by an event Governor Hogan attended on December 2, 2020, MDOT will plan to participate in a likely event during 2021 to fulfill under Article 1, “Through friendly consultations, the parties agree to make concerted efforts, on the basis of equality and mutual benefits, to promote friendly contact between the two sides, and actively carry out exchanges and cooperation for economic development within their respective area of competence in the following areas in particular: port sector.
- MDOT plans to participate, as requested by the Government of Anhui Province China in the January 12, 2021 Event celebrating the 40 Year Anniversary of the State of Maryland and Anhui Sister State partnership.
- MDOT, working with MDOT MPA will work toward completing a Sister Port relationship agreement with Maryland’s Sister State, Anhui Province, China consistent with our discussions during a visit to Anhui Province by MDOT and MDOT-MPA Officials in the Fall of 2019, prior to the pandemic.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- Port of Baltimore cargo numbers continue to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic lows of the spring of 2020 to the point many are now ahead of the 2019 monthly year over year results.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Key accomplishments:

- The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) Secretary Dr. James D. Fielder worked in cooperation with the Department of Commerce, International Division, to facilitate a first-of-its-kind roundtable discussion between Russia and the United States regarding the 75th anniversary of the Victory against Nazi Germany, utilizing expert faculty and student participation.
- MHEC worked with higher education institutions from across the state to bring historians, students, and professors from Maryland's colleges and universities for an exchange in robust dialogue with faculty counterparts from Russia.

Possible Outcomes:

- A published report of the discussion
- A webinar that can be shared on social media and other digital platforms
- A video that can be distributed to students (high school and college students) in both Maryland and Russia for class discussion

The project was put on hold in late 2020, with discussion of revisiting a new project in 2021.

- MHEC worked with the World Artists Experiences (WAE), which hosted its first International Education Month Summit in November of 2020. MHEC notified all higher education institution presidents and asked them to disperse the information to the proper student organizations, to promote the summit across all Maryland campuses. All college and university marketing and social media officers were also contacted, requesting support in promoting the summit on their website and social media channels.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- Russia

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- Secretary Fielder looks forward to working with the Department of Commerce, International Division, on new partnerships in 2021.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- When it became apparent in early 2020 that COVID-19 was about to impact Maryland's postsecondary students, Dr. Fielder organized discussions with all two-year and four-year higher education institution in the state, and the Department of Health. The discussions centered on students enrolled in International Study Programs to ensure there was a coordinated effort across Maryland.

Maryland State Department of Education

Key accomplishments:

- The Maryland Seal of Biliteracy program for the 2019-2020 school year had 22 participating local school systems. A total of 3,365 Maryland seniors earned a Seal of Biliteracy by achieving high levels of proficiency in English and another language based on scores on rigorous nationally recognized language assessments. Languages represented include Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Haitian Creole, Hindi, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. Numerous graduates received the Seal of Biliteracy in more than one language. Local school systems devised creative virtual award ceremonies for their recipients.
- MSDE has been collaborating with WAE (World Artists Experiences) to offer learning opportunities for Marylanders and Continuing Professional Development Credits to teachers. A writing workshop was held at TECRO (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office) in early March. The instructor was Michael Glaser, former Poet Laureate of Maryland.
- Visits from international artists are currently being held virtually. WAE has developed a training course for a Cultural Ambassador Program and is in the process of planning additional cultural immersion experiences at embassies and museums.
- November was declared International Education Month by Governor Hogan. to celebrate this proclamation, WAE, in partnership with universities, museums, government agencies and international organizations, hosted a virtual Summit, Connecting Communities Through Mutual Cultural Understanding.

- MSDE is continuing its partnership with NSA. The first Polyglot Games were planned for 2020 in which team's language students competed in games modeled after NSA's Language Wars. Maryland's first event was held in March 2020 in Charles County. Unfortunately, Polyglot Games at other local school systems were canceled because of school closures caused to the pandemic. NSA continues to support local school systems through internships, virtual career panels and online mentoring to students.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- Latin America
- Europe
- China

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- NSA will be continuing to sponsor internships and virtual mentoring opportunities for students studying critical languages.
- Partnerships with embassies to offer virtual and/or in-person professional learning experiences for language teachers are being planned.
- WAE is exploring additional cultural events in which artists will perform for schools and community organizations.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- International teacher and student exchanges, as well as visits from education officials and artists have been suspended.
- Cultural programs have taken place virtually.
- The difficulty in hiring international teachers is creating teacher shortages in some local school systems.

Maryland Department of Health

Key accomplishments:

- The Department provided culturally informed and language-accessible health screening services to ~1300 humanitarian immigrants representing over 30 different countries who made Maryland their new home.
- In partnership with local health departments, the Department tested many poultry workers (many of whom originated from countries in Central America or Haiti) for COVID-19 as part of the COVID outbreak response.
- Through the Linkage to Care project, of those who were screened and deemed positive, the Department linked 87% of Maryland residents, born in Asian and Pacific Island countries and 94% of those born in African countries to Hepatitis B & C-related care.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- Central America
- Cameroon

- Afghanistan

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- The Department continues to work with clinical and community-based partners to increase access to various culturally informed and language-accessible communicable screening services.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- Many public health educational and outreach activities, typically delivered in-person, had to be transitioned to a virtual platform. However, access to technology required for virtual health education is not uniform across the communities the Department serves and as such, the ability to reach everyone has been limited.

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Key accomplishments:

- Made key connections, supported brewery, distillery sales to Canada, EU.
- Developing inbound mission of Asian buyers for forestry industry.
- Connected Maryland ag companies with virtual trade shows.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- Canada
- EU
- UAE

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- Develop inbound forestry buyers' mission from Asia.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- Travel has stopped. Sales are limited to long-term projects begun in 2018, 2019.

Maryland Department of Environment

Key accomplishments:

- Held a virtual meeting with two representatives from the Japanese Embassy's Economic Section to discuss climate change mitigation and conservation efforts in Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay watershed region.
- Held a virtual meeting with executive staff from Canada-based firm "Sonoash" to discuss the regulatory landscape in Maryland for coal fly ash reuse.
- Secretary Grumbles was a keynote speaker at the virtual India Water Impact Summit, where he was able to share successes and difficulties Maryland has faced while coordinating with the other Chesapeake Bay Watershed states to achieve a common goal. Secretary Grumbles extended an invitation to all 1,000 attendees to visit Maryland and experience first hand how we are protecting one of our nation's most precious natural assets, the Chesapeake Bay.

List top 3 most important regions/countries dealt with in 2020:

- Japan
- Canada

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- International Delegations - MDE will continue to be open to hosting visits from international delegations interested in discussing issues pertaining to the environment, public health, climate change, and conservation.

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- The 2020 global climate change conference was postponed due to the coronavirus-19 pandemic. The 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference was originally scheduled to be in Glasgow, Scotland. The event had been planned to be hosted by the United Kingdom in partnership with Italy, but it was postponed until 2021.
- Due to the decrease in in-person events being held during the pandemic, networking to build international relationships has been and will continue to be difficult.

Maryland Military Department

Key accomplishments:

In 2020, the Maryland National Guard (MDNG – comprised of the Maryland Army (MDARNG) and Air (MDANG) National Guard) conducted 42 State Partnership Program (SPP) events, 21 with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and 21 with Estonia. The significant drop in events from last calendar year to this can be attributed to one thing: COVID-19. The State of Maryland, Department of Defense, and the US European Command necessarily imposed severe travel restrictions to combat the pandemic starting in mid-March 2020. Although they have been conducted, the significant time difference between Maryland and Europe has proved to be challenge in holding virtual events.

Highlights of the MDNG SPP during 2020 include:

Tri-lateral Events:

- The MDARNG and Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH) are participating in Estonian Defense Forces (EDF) Exercise Winter Camp in Estonia 07-24 February 2020. Also eight members of MDNG will be the US color guard for the Estonia Independence Day parade.
- The MDNG conducted this year's Best Warrior Competition 9-17 March in Edgewood, Maryland. While the competition was a success, participants from partner nations Estonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had difficulty with departure arrangements afterwards due to COVID-19 and had to be quarantined upon their return to their home countries.

Estonia:

- The Adjutant General (TAG: Major General Timothy Gowen) conducted a meet and greet with Estonian Ambassador to the United States Jonatan Vesviov and Major General (Maj Gen) Martin Herem, Estonian Chief of Defense, in Washington, DC on 04 February 2020. This was the first meeting between Maj Gen Martin Herem and Maj Gen Gowen. They discussed current and future Maryland National Guard support to the Baltic region.

- TAG visited Estonia 22-27 February 2020 to, among other things, participate in the Estonian Independence Day celebration. On 28 February 2020, he also visited the 729th Composite Supply Company, a MDARNG unit that is currently deployed to Powidz, Poland. This unit contains about 170 personnel and is logistically supporting Operation Atlantic Resolve in Poland for the next ten months.
- TAG met with Estonian Ambassador to the United States Jon Vsevoiv on 11 Sep 2020 and then again on 29 October 2020. The follow up meeting from September discussed U.S. positions within the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) Multinational Division North (MND-N), COVID-19 issues, SPP and other news / notes.
- The EDF is presently (01-09 December 2020) conducting Joint Tactical Air Control terminal guidance training at Warren Grove Gunnery Range in Ocean County, NJ and the airspace in vicinity of Salisbury, MD with the assistance of A-10 fighters from the MDANG. In order to participate in this training exercise, EDF participants were first required to quarantine in the United States for more than a week.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- TAG met with BiH Ambassador to the United States Bojan Vujić and Maryland Secretary of State Wobensmith in Washington, DC on 28 January 2020 to discuss international partnering opportunities.
- TAG conducted on office call with Republika Srpska (Serb Republic) President Zeljka Cvijanovic at the Pentagon on 05 February 2020. Republika Srpska is one of the two entities that comprise Bosnia and Herzegovina (the other one being the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- The Director of Joint Staff (DJS: Brig Gen Adam Flasch) visited the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Embassy for a meeting with BiH Ambassador H.E. Bojan Vujić and Defense Attaché on 20 October 20.
- The Armed Forces of BiH, MDNG Public Affairs Office (PAO) and United States Air Force Europe (USAFE) conducted an Air-Ground Integration Exercise (AGIE) November 15-20, 2020. The MDNG PAO supported this exercise virtually working with USAFE PAO. While originally the MDNG was going to provide A-10 fighters for this close air support exercise, it will now be USAFE providing several F-16 fighters instead. There is major significance in this exercise as it has been in planning for several years and required significant political capital to pull off.

Major international goals, projects, or events upcoming for 2021:

- Estonia-Maryland Partnership. This relationship focuses on increasing the capacity of the EDF and EDL to accomplish their military requirements, increasing support to civil authorities, and meeting the EUCOM objectives of ensuring ready forces and strategic access in support of EUCOM and NATO theater objectives. In the coming year, the MDNG plans participate in two major exercises in Estonia – Saber Strike and Spring Storm. Our engagement priorities in Federal Fiscal Year 2021 are:
 1. Regional Partnering and Collaboration
 2. Special Operations Forces
 3. US Defense Posture

4. Air Operational Access
 5. Disaster Preparedness Capability
 6. Command, Control, Communications, and Computers (C4) Interoperability
 7. Combined Land Forces Interoperability, Deployability, and Standardization
 8. Cyber Security
 9. Defense Governance: Support to Defense Institutions
 10. Environmental Security
 11. Essential Services Capacity
 12. Intelligence Security Cooperation
 13. Military Medical Capabilities
- Bosnia and Herzegovina-Maryland Partnership. This relationship focuses on the modernizing and professionalizing of the AFBiH to strengthen our partnership, achieve NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) objectives, as well as improving and coordinating AFBiH support to civil authorities. Engagements promote BiH integration, AFBiH activation of NATO MAP, and development into NATO ally. In the coming year, the MDNG will participate in one major BiH exercise testing natural disaster preparedness. Our engagement priorities in Federal Fiscal Year 2021 are:
 1. Disaster Preparedness
 2. Military Medical and Evacuation
 3. Aviation Sustainment
 4. Regional Partnering events
 5. National Level Exercises
 6. Intelligence, Command/Control/Communications/Computers (C4), and Cyber
 7. Partnering
 8. Strategic Communications/Public Affairs
 - As we support our partners in both BiH and Estonia, we are also honing our own high-level skills by exercising the following Universal Joint Tasks:
 1. OP 8.2 Conduct Military Exchanges (Operational level)
 2. ST 5.1.4 Monitor Strategic Situation (Strategic Theater level)
 3. ST 8.1.1 Enhance Political-Military (POLMIL) Relations (Strategic Theater level)
 4. ST 8 Perform Military Engagement (Strategic Theater level)
 5. ST 8.1 Coordinate Regional Relations (Strategic Theater level)
 6. ST 8.2 Coordinate Multinational Operations (Strategic Theater level)

What impact has the pandemic had on the agency's international affairs?

- There were dramatic reductions in partner events.

Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

Key accomplishments:

- GOCI's varied efforts to aid in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic has manifested in several acquisitions and redistributions of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that have been sourced from foreign countries. Principal among these efforts was former GOCI Communications Director Soo Koo's leading role as translator for "Operation Enduring Friendship". The operations goal of acquiring 500k COVID-19 test kits from the Republic of South Korea came at a time when not just Maryland, but our entire nation was desperately in need of the adequate testing capability required to control the spread of the deadly virus. Director Koo's tireless efforts were acknowledged for "special thanks" by Governor Hogan during his live press conference to announce the acquisition.
- Through GOCI's close working relationship with the Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Director's Koo, Lundfeldt, Colston and Poy coordinated several donations of PPE from sources that include non-profits with international partnerships, privately-owned foreign businesses with philanthropic interests, and diplomatic sources. There has not been an official reckoning, but donations have been received from Vietnam, Colombia, South Korea, India, and organizations with partners in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southwest Asia. With the guidance of the MD Department of Health, supplies have been distributed to many area hospitals, nursing homes and various other healthcare providers.
- Middle Eastern American Affairs chair, Hesam Aghdami, personally coordinated a donation of approximately 1500 new surgical masks and KN95 masks that were distributed with the assistance of Secretary Schrader and Gregg Todd of the MD Department of Health. The masks were sourced through Zam Zam Water, an international humanitarian organization.
- The continued efforts of Hispanic Affairs commissioners Walkiria Pool and Liliana Castro to lead the Maryland Complete Count Committee, augmented by Hispanic Affairs Director Lorena Rivera taking a temporary leadership role within the Department of Planning were rewarded with the State of Maryland finishing 9th in the nation for self-response, with 21 counties and 91 municipalities meeting or exceeding their 2010 rates. Working with several local and international organizations, plus embassy/diplomatic partners, the ground-level work required to increase confidence and reduce fears about the potential uses and/or misuses of the US Census Report has proven successful.
- While the normal activities of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives were drastically curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, significant work was done to move forward with the "Prosper Africa" initiative begun in 2019. The Governor's Commission on African Affairs sub-committee for Business and Economic Development, led by commissioner Felix Obi, successfully partnered with the African Union, the African Diplomatic Corps and the United States Agency of International Development to bring about the African Union Trade Conference. The very well attended event is summed up by Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith, who served as the opening speaker,

"Maryland was privileged to be chosen by the powerhouse trifecta including the African Union, the African Diplomatic Corps, and the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) as the location for these crucial discussions. With the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) set to terminate in 2025, the Trade Conference captured the sense of urgency that now is the time to launch the next phase of trade and investment projects between the United States and Africa, one that supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), sustainable development, and an integration of African economies."

Major international goals, projects or events upcoming for 2021:

- The goal of increased international engagement remains a priority within the ethnic commissions, as part of the overall mission of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives to act as a coordinating agency for the governor that connects Marylander's to economic, volunteer and human service opportunities through government, nonprofit and private partnerships.

Photo library



[MSDE – Seal of Biliteracy Medal]



[MSDE – Polygot games]



[MSDE – Polygot games]



[Commerce - Booth at Arab Health 2020]



[Commerce -Secretary Schulz at the October opening of the Hagerstown Logistics Center]



[Commerce - Lt Governor Rutherford speaks at the Cyber Tech Tel Aviv Conference]



[Commerce - Sonavi Labs, headquartered in Baltimore City, named winner of Innov8 Talks global pitch competition at Arab Health 2020 conference in Dubai]



[SOS – Secretary Wobensmith and Ambassador Ha Kim Ngoc of Vietnam with Cuong and Ella Nguyen owners of ECOMNET USA INC donate 10,000 masks to the Maryland Food Bank]



[SOS –Ambassador Serdar Kilic of Turkey presents Secretary Wobensmith with PPE donated by the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) and the Turkish American National Steering Committee (TASC) accompanied by Chair Gunay Evinch and Co-Chair Berker Hazar]



[SOS –Presentation of ECOMNET masks to Maryland Food Bank, left to right Ella Nguyen, Cuong Nguyen, Ambassador Ha, Susan Thomas, Secretary Wobensmith, Christian Poy, George Dang, Norman and Tara VanToai]



[MDA – Sagamore Spirits Distillery]



[SOS – General Assembly guide gives South African athletes a tour of the Maryland State House]



[SOS – Colleen Fisher of the U.S. Commercial Service gives a presentation on the USMCA and the China Trade Deal at the quarterly Governor's Subcabinet for International Affairs meeting]



[SOS – Secretary Wobensmith speaks on a panel at Meridian with other Secretaries of State about the election process in their state]



[SOS – Secretary Fielder and Wobensmith meet with Consul General Dr. Arifi Saiman of Indonesia to discuss Sister States and educational exchange for teachers and students]



[SOS – BESA Exhibit Teacher Training for Maryland teachers, courtesy of the Maryland-Negev Israel Committee]



[MDA – Anhui Province’s Foreign Cooperation Division, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department meet with Deputy Secretary Oberg, Steve Connelly, Mark Powell and Steve Drake]



[SOS – Director of International Programs, Mary (Mendy) E. Nitsch presents to LEAD Maryland fellows on Maryland’s international partnerships]



[SOS – Secretary Wobensmith and Consul General of Mexico Rafael Lavaega sign a cooperation agreement between the Address Confidentiality Program and the Mexican Consulate]



[SOS – Governor Hogan, accompanied by Secretary Wobensmith, gives remarks at the signing of an agreement between Maryland and the region of Hauts-de-France, France at the Ambassador of France’s residence in Washington, D.C.]



[SOS – Governor Hogan and Ambassador of France, Philippe Etienne knock elbows, COVID-19 safe protocol]